Numb. 90

The TATLER.

By *Isaac Bickerstaff* Esq;

——— *Amoto quæramus Seria Ludo.* Hor.

From *Thursday November* 3. to *Saturday November* 5. 1709.

Will's Coffee-house, October 4.

THE Passion of Love happen'd to be the Subject of Discourse between two or three of us at the Table of the Poets this Evening; and among other Observations, it was remark'd, that the same Sentiment on this Passion had run through all Languages and Nations. *Menmius*, who has a very good Taste, fell into a little Sort of Dissertation on this Occasion. It is (said he) remarkable, that no Passion has been treated by all who have touch'd upon it with the same Bent of Design but this. The Poets, the Moralists, the Painters, in all their Descripsions, Allegories, and Pictures, have represented it as a soft Torment, a bitter sweet, a pleasing Pain, or an agreeable Distress, and have only express'd the same Thought in a different Manner. The joining of Pleasure and Pain together in such Devices, seems to me, the only pointed Thought I ever read which is natural; and it must have proceeded from its being the universal Sense and Experience of Mankind, that they have all spoken of it in the same Manner. I have in my own Reading remark'd an Hundred and three Epigrams, Fifty Odes, and Ninety one Sentences, tending to this sole Purpose. It is certain, there is no other Passion which does produce such contrary Effects in so great a Degree: But this may be said for Love, that if you strike it out of the Soul, Life would be insipid, and our Being but half animated. Human Nature would sink into Deadness and Lethargy, if not quickned with some active Principle; and as for all others, whether Ambition, Envy, or Avarice, which are apt to possess the Mind in the Absence of this Passion, it must be allow'd that they have greater Pains, without the Compensation of such exquisite Pleasures as those we find in Love. The great Skill is to heighten the Satisfactions, and deaden the Sorrows of it, which has been the End of many of my Labours, and shall continue to be so for the Service of the World in general, and in Particular of the Fair Sex, who are always the best or the worst Part of it. It is pity that a Passion, which has in it a Capacity of making Life happy, should not be cultivated to the utmost Advantage. Reason, Prudence, and good Nature, rightly apply'd, can throughly accomplish this great End, provided they have always a real and constant Love to work upon. But this Subject I shall treat more at large in the History of my married Sister, and in the mean Time shall conclude my Reflection on the Pains and Pleasures which attend this Passion with one of the finest Allegories which I think I have ever read. It is invented by the Divine *Plato*, and to show the Opinion he himself had of it, ascrib'd by him to his admir'd *Socrates*, whom he represents as discoursing with his Friends, and giving the History of Love in the following Manner:

At the Birth of *Beauty* (says he) there was a great Feast made, and many Guests invited: Among the rest, was the God *Plenty*, who was the Son of the Goddess *Prudence*, and inherited many of his Mother's Virtues. After a full Entertainment, he retir'd into the Garden of *Jupiter*, which was hung with a great Variety of Ambrosial Fruits, and seems to have been a very proper Retreat for such a Guest. In the mean time an unhappy Female, call'd *Poverty*, having heard of this great Feast, repair'd to it in Hopes of finding Relief. The first Place she light upon was *Jupiter*'s Garden, which generally stands open to People of all Conditions. *Poverty* enters, and by Chance finds the God *Plenty* asleep in it. She was immediately fir'd with his Charms, lay'd her self down by his Side, and manag'd Matters so well, that she conceived a Child by him. The World was very much in Suspence upon the Occasion, and could not imagine to themselves what would be the Nature of an Infant that was to have its Original from Two such Parents. At the last the Child appears; and who should it be but Love. This Infant grew up, and prov'd in all his Behaviour what he really was, a Compound of opposite Beings. As he is the Son of *Plenty*, (who was the Offspring of *Prudence*) he is subtle, intriguing, full of Stratagems and Devices; as the Son of *Poverty*, he is fawning, begging, importuning, delighting to lie at a Threshold, or beneath a Window. By the Father, he is audacious, full of Hopes, conscious of Merit, and therefore quick of Resentment: By the Mother, he is doubtful, timorous, mean-spirited, fearful of offending, and abject in Submissions. In the same Hour you may see him, transported with Raptures, talking of immortal Pleasures, and appearing satisfy'd as a God; and immediately after, as the mortal Mother prevails in his Composition, you behold him pining, languishing, despairing, dying.

I have been always wonderfully delighted with Fables, Allegories, and the like Inventions, which the politest and the best Instructors of Mankind have always made Use of: They take off from the Severity of Instruction and enforce it at the same Time that they conceal it. The supposing *Love* to be conceiv'd immediately after the Birth of *Beauty*, the Parentage of *Plenty*, and the Inconsistency of this Passion with its self so naturally deriv'd to it, are great Master-Strokes in this Fable; and if they fell into good Hands, might furnish out a more pleasing Calista than any in *Spencer*.

From

From my own Apartment, November 4.

I came home this Evening in a very penſive Mood; and to divert me, took up a Volume of *Shakeſpear*, where I chanc'd to caſt my Eye upon a Part in the Tragedy of *Richard the Third*, which fill'd my Mind with a very agreeable Horror. It was the Scene in which that bold, but wicked Prince, is repreſented as ſleeping in his Tent, the Night before the Battle in which he fell. The Poet takes that Occaſion to ſet before him in a Viſion a terrible Aſſembly of Apparitions, the Ghoſts of all thoſe innocent Perſons whom he is ſaid to have murther'd. Prince *Edward*, *Henry* the Sixth, the Duke of *Clarence*, *Rivers*, *Gray*, and *Vaughan*, Lord *Haſtings*, the Two young Princes Sons to *Edward* the Fourth, his own Wife, and the Duke of *Buckingham*, riſe up in their Blood before him, beginning their Speeches with that dreadful Salutation, *Let me ſit heavy on thy Soul to Morrow*; and concluding with that diſmal Sentence, *Deſpair and die.* This inſpires the Tyrant with a Dream of his paſt Guilt, and of the approaching Vengeance. He anticipates the fatal Day of *Boſworth*, fancies himſelf diſmounted, weltring in his own Blood; and in the Agonies of Deſpair, (before he is throughly awake) ſtarts up with the following Speech:

Give me another Horſe--- Bind up my Wounds!
Have Mercy Jeſu--- Soft, I did but dream.
O Coward Conſcience! How doſt thou afflict me?
The Lights burn blue. Is it not dead Midnight?
Cold fearful Drops ſtand on my trembling Fleſh;
What do I fear? My ſelf! &c.

A Scene written with ſo great Strength of Imagination, indiſpos'd me from further reading, and threw me into a deep Contemplation. I began to reflect upon the different Ends of good and bad Kings; and as this was the Birth-Day of our late Renown'd Monarch, I could not forbear thinking on the Departure of that excellent Prince, whoſe Life was crown'd with Glory, and his Death with Peace. I let my Mind go ſo far into this Thought, as to imagine to my ſelf, what might have been the Viſion of his departing Slumbers. He might have ſeen Confederate Kings applauding him in different Languages, Slaves that had been bound in Fetters lifting up their Hands and bleſſing him, and the Perſecuted in their ſeveral Forms of Worſhip imploring Comfort on his laſt Moments. The Reflection upon this excellent Prince's Mortality had been a very melancholy Entertainment to me, had I not been reliev'd by the Conſideration of the glorious Reign which ſucceeds it.

We now ſee as great a Virtue as ever was on the *Britiſh* Throne, ſurrounded with all the Beauty of Succeſs. Our Nation may not only boaſt of a long Series of great, regular, and well-laid Deſigns, but alſo of Triumphs and Victories; while we have the Happineſs to ſee our Sovereign exerciſe that true Policy which tends to make a Kingdom great and happy, and at the ſame Time enjoy the good and glorious Effect of it.

Advertiſements.

There is lately publiſh'd,

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On Wedneſday next will be publiſh'd,

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